

Dear All,

We arrived in “wintry” Kaseye some three weeks ago. On January 12<sup>th</sup>, it was -2 degrees Celsius in Zurich where we spent some relaxing days with family and friends. Regarding weather, our stop-over in Switzerland was according to expectations, a mixture of snow and rain - cozy inside, but rather unfriendly outside. When we arrived in Dar-es-Salaam, it was 32 degrees Celsius! We survived our 15-hour trip to Kaseye well thanks to our driver and friend’s excellent services.

In Kaseye we were greeted by friends and acquaintances as well as an abundance of new and unfinished assignments. So far, the weather has been cooperative in spite of the rain showers. In Northern Malawi, we rarely have days that are just overcast with rain-filled clouds ready to release their load at any time. Here and there, the sun frequently peeks through.

We are hoping to finish the new OP ward by mid-July. This is a tall order, indeed. Compared to North America and Europe, the workers take an awfully long time to complete a job. I have come to the conclusion that their work attitude is more fatalistic than lazy. With so many obstacles in the way, tomorrow is never a given. Mud slides, washed-out fields and streets, leaky roofs (a never-ending, aggravating occurrence in the hospital!), malaria bouts, animal epidemics (currently one that befalls hoofed animals) and, and .....

We are fortunate to have Toni and Lotte, both AA people, among our guests. They are helping Dr. Simchimba to consolidate the young AA groups they established last year. Lotte is also a wonderful all-round person for many smaller projects. She is a retired business woman who owned a restaurant and a catering business in Vienna. Her knowledge and skills greatly help us to plan and execute the renovation of the hospital laundry with confidence. The laundry must be ready when the German surgeons start doing surgeries in Kaseye. Surgeries bring loads of laundry! As I am writing this brief report, the German physicians are operating at Chitipa District Hospital. Their focus are goiters. We are very, very fortunate that our INTERPLAST anesthesiologist was able to convince her friend to be part of the team. Dr. Claudia is a young, very skilled dentist. Assisted by Joshua, our eager INTERPLAST volunteer from Tanzania, she is treating patients flooding in from near and far and teaches prevention in the primary and secondary schools in our area. Best of all, Claudia loves it here and is planning to come back with suitable instruments and furnishings for our new dental room. She is currently treating her patients with basic equipment, tailored, though, to the special needs in developing countries. Claudia’s presence is a seemingly endless dream of mine come true. For quite some years, I had been writing to a respectable number of places in Switzerland and Canada for help with our dental clinic – to no avail! Dentists seem to be even busier than our INTERPLAST surgeons and nurses, who always find two weeks here and there to bring healing and hope to the many destitute Northern Malawians in need of medical help.

Especially in the rainy season, we are aware of the lack of shelters for guardians (the patients’ families), employees and equipment. I am writing a grant for funds to renovate old and build new shelters. A warehouse is still a long way away! But with patience and persistence, wonderful things do happen! As the dental clinic is taking on shape thanks to Claudia, so will eventually the warehouse. Imagine, we will receive the second visit of the administrator of the Solon Foundation. Mr. Funk is willing to assist us financially with the renovation of a very old primary school building into a communication center, a place where we will, finally, be able to communicate with the world. We are now getting some Internet connection from Airtel Malawi, and it is improving every day! A generous donor in Germany gave INTERPLAST a good number of gently used desktop computers for the new center..... and the German Government is even looking into the possibility of equipping the hospital with a solar system. The

blackouts are somewhat shorter, but the situation is not ideal by any means. Just this morning, we could not hang our new handwashing station in front of the OP Male Ward due to lack of power! These situations and many other problems in and around the hospital may become history thanks to the support of our donors. As always, everybody in Kaseye conveys a big thank-you to all “our partners and friends.”

It is getting darker and darker. Since we do not have as much sun as in the dry season, we must save solar energy. Like in olden days, we faithfully turn off lights, light candles and take cold showers! The new phenomenon of charging cell phones, tablets and computers is held in check by nightly blackouts of solar energy imposed by Thomas, not the Malawi Government who handles the country’s regular blackouts.

We are thinking of all of you and sending you our heartfelt greetings from the far North of the Warm Heart of Africa,

Elisabeth and Thomas